

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal
CONDUCTED BY
CHARLES DICKENS
WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED
"HOUSEHOLD WORDS"

No. 528. NEW SERIES. SATURDAY, JANUARY 11, 1879. PRICE TWOPENCE.

VIXEN.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET," &c. &c.

CHAPTER XIX. I SHALL LOOK LIKE THE WICKED FAIRY.

NOTHING in Captain Winstanley's manner during the sultry summer days which went before his marriage betrayed his knowledge of Violet Tempest's rebellious spirit. He would not see that he was obnoxious to her, and spoke to her and looked at her as sweetly as if there had been the friendliest understanding between them. In all his conduct, in any act of his which approached the assumption of authority, he went to work with supreme gentleness. Yet he had his grip upon everything already, and was extending his arms in every direction, like an octopus. There were alterations being made in the garden which Violet knew were his, although Mrs. Tempest was supposed to have originated them. He had, in some measure, assumed dominion over the stables. His two hunters were already quartered there. Vixen saw them when she went her morning round with a basket of bread. They were long-bodied, hungry-looking animals; and the grooms reported them ravenous and insatiable in their feeding.

"When they've eat their corn they eats their 'ay, and when they've eat their 'ay they eats their bed, and then they takes and gnaws the wooden partitions. I never see such brutes," complained Bates, the head-groom.

Vixen fancied these animals were in some wise typical of their owner. One morning when Vixen was leaning upon the half-door of Arion's loose box, giving

herself up to a quarter of an hour's petting of that much-beloved animal, Captain Winstanley came into the stable.

"Good-morning, Miss Tempest. Petting that pretty little bay of yours? I'm afraid you spoil him. You ought to hunt him next October."

"I shall never hunt again."

"Pshaw! At your age there's no such word as never. He's the neatest little hunter in the Forest. And on off-days you might ride one of mine."

"Thanks," said Vixen, with a supercilious glance at the most leggy of the two hunters, "I shouldn't care to be up there."

"Oh, by-the-way," said Captain Winstanley, opening the door of another loose box, "what are we to do with this fellow?"

"This fellow" was a grand-looking bay, with herculean quarters, short legs, and a head like a war-horse. He snorted indignantly as the captain slapped his flank, and reared his splendid crest, and seemed as if he said "Ha, ha!"

"I don't quite know of whom you are speaking when you say 'we,'" said Vixen, with an unsmiling countenance.

"Naturally of your mother and myself. I should like to include you in all our family arrangements, present or future; but you seem to prefer being left outside."

"Yes," replied Vixen; "I prefer to stand alone."

"Very well, then. I repeat my question—though, as you decline to have any voice in our arrangements, it's hardly worth while to trouble you about it—what are we to do with this fellow?"

"Do with him? My father's horse!" exclaimed Vixen; "the horse he rode to

his dying day! Why, keep him, of course!"

"Don't you think that is rather foolish? Nobody rides or drives him. It takes all one man's time to groom him and exercise him. You might just as well keep a white elephant in the stables."

"He was my father's favourite horse," said Vixen, with indignant tears clouding the bright hazel of her eyes; "I cannot imagine mamma capable of parting with him. Yet I ought not to say that, after my experience of the last few months," she added in an undertone.

"Well, my dear Miss Tempest, family affection is a very charming sentiment, and I can quite understand that you, and your mamma, would be anxious to secure your father's horse a good home and a kind master; but I cannot comprehend your mamma being so foolish as to keep a horse which is of no use to any member of her family. If the brute were of a little lighter build, I wouldn't mind riding him myself, and selling one of mine. But he's too much of a weight-carrier for me."

Vixen gave Arion a final hug, drying those angry tears upon his soft neck, and left the stable without another word. She went straight to her mother's morning-room, where the widow was sitting at a table covered with handkerchiefs and glove-boxes, deeply absorbed in the study of their contents, assisted by the faithful Pauline, otherwise Polly, who had been wearing smarter gowns and caps ever since her mistress's engagement, and who was getting up a trousseau on her own account, in order to enter upon her new phase of existence with due dignity.

"We shall keep more company, I make no doubt, with such a gay young master as the captain," she had observed in the confidences of Mrs. Trimmer's comfortable parlour.

"I can never bring myself to think Swedish gloves pretty," said Mrs. Tempest, as Vixen burst into the room, "but they are the fashion, and one must wear them."

"Mamma," cried Vixen, "Captain Winstanley wants you to sell Bullfinch. If you let him be sold, you will be the meanest of women."

And with this startling address Vixen left the room as suddenly as she had entered it, banging the door behind her.

Time, which brings all things, brought the eve of Mrs. Tempest's wedding. The small but perfect trousseau, subject of such anxious thoughts, so much study, was

completed. The travelling dresses were packed in two large oilskin-covered baskets, ready for the Scottish tour. The new travelling-bag, with monograms in pink coral on silver gilt, a wedding present from Captain Winstanley, occupied the place of honour in Mrs. Tempest's dressing-room. The wedding dress, of cream-coloured brocade and old point lace, with a bonnet of lace and water-lilies, was spread upon the sofa. Everything in Mrs. Tempest's apartment bore witness to the impending change in the lady's life. Most of all, the swollen eyelids and pale cheeks of the lady, who, on this vigil of her wedding-day, had given herself up to weeping.

"Oh, mum, your eyes will be so red to-morrow," remonstrated Pauline, coming into the room with another dainty little box, newly-arrived from the nearest railway-station, and surprising her mistress in tears. "Do have some red lavender. Or let me make you a cup of tea."

Mrs. Tempest had been sustaining nature with cups of tea all through the agitating day. It was a kind of dram-drinking, and she was as much a slave of the teapot as the forlorn drunken drab of St. Giles's is a slave of the gin-bottle.

"Yes; you may get me another cup of tea, Pauline. I feel awfully low to-night."

"You seem so, mum. I'm sure if I didn't want to marry him, I wouldn't, if I was you. It's never too late for a woman to change her mind, not even when she's inside the church. I've known it done. I wouldn't have him, mum, if you feel your mind turn against him at the last," concluded the lady's maid energetically.

"Not marry him, Pauline, when he is so good and noble, so devoted, so unselfish!"

Mrs. Tempest might have extended this list of virtues indefinitely, if her old servant had not pulled her up rather sharply.

"Well, mum, if he's so good and you're so fond of him, why cry?"

"You don't understand, Pauline. At such a time there are many painful feelings. I have been thinking, naturally, of my dear Edward, the best and most generous of husbands. Twenty years last June since we were married. What a child I was, Pauline, knowing nothing of the world. I had a lovely trousseau; but I daresay if we could see the dresses now we should think them absolutely ridiculous. Dear Edward! He was one of the handsomest men I ever saw. How could Violet believe that I should sell his horse?"

"Well, mum, hearing Captain Winstanley talk about it, she naturally——"

"Captain Winstanley would never wish me to do anything I did not like."

The captain had not said a word about Bullfinch since that morning in the stable. The noble brute still occupied his loose box, and was fed and petted daily by Vixen, and was taken for gallops in the dry glades of the forest, or among the gorse and heath of Boldrewood.

Mrs. Tempest had dined—or rather had not dined—in her own room on this last day of her widowhood. Captain Winstanley had business in London, and was coming back to Hampshire by the last train. There had been no settlements. The captain had nothing to settle, and Mrs. Tempest confided in her lover too completely to desire to fence herself round with legal protections and precautions. Having only a life interest in the estate, she had nothing to leave, except the multifarious ornaments, frivolities and luxuries, which the squire had presented to her in the course of their wedded life.

It had been altogether a trying day, Mrs. Tempest complained: in spite of the diversion to painful thought which was continually being offered by the arrival of some interesting item of the trousseau, elegant trifles, ordered ever so long ago, which kept dropping in at the last moment. Violet and her mother had not met that day, and now night was hurrying on; the owls were hooting in the forest; their monotonous cry sounded every now and then through the evening silence like a prophecy of evil. In less than twelve hours the wedding was to take place; and as yet Vixen had shown no sign of relenting.

The dress had come from Madame Theodore's. Pauline had thrown it over a chair, with an artistic carelessness which displayed the tasteful combination of cream colour and pale azure.

Mrs. Tempest contemplated it with a pathetic countenance.

"It is simply perfect!" she exclaimed. "Theodore has a most delicate mind. There is not an atom too much blue. And how exquisitely the drapery falls! It looks as if it had been blown together. The Vandyke hat too! Violet would look lovely in it. I do not think if I were a wicked mother I should take so much pains to select an elegant costume for her. But I have always studied her dress. Even when she was in pinafores I took care that she should be picturesque. And

she rewards my care by refusing to be present at my wedding. It is very cruel."

The clock struck twelve. The obscure bird clamoured a little louder in his woodland haunt. The patient Pauline, who had packed everything and arranged everything, and borne with her mistress's dolefulness all day long, began to yawn piteously.

"If you'd let me brush your hair now, mum," she suggested at last, "I could get to bed. I should like to be fresh to-morrow morning."

"Are you tired?" exclaimed Mrs. Tempest wonderingly.

"Well, mum, stooping over them dress-baskets is rather tiring, and its past twelve."

"You can go. I'll brush my hair myself."

"No, mum, I wouldn't allow that anyhow. It would make your arms ache. You ought to get to bed as soon as ever you can, or you'll look tired and 'aggard to-morrow."

That word haggard alarmed Mrs. Tempest. She would not have objected to look pale and interesting on her wedding-day, like one who had spent the previous night in tears; but haggardness suggested age; and she wanted to look her youngest when uniting herself to a husband who was her junior by some years.

So Pauline was allowed to hurry on the evening toilet. The soft pretty hair, not so abundant as it used to be, was carefully brushed; the night lamp was lighted; and Pauline left her mistress sitting by her dressing-table in her flowing white raiment, pale, graceful, subdued in colouring, like a classic figure in a faded fresco.

She sat with fixed eyes, deep in thought, for some time after Pauline had left her, then looked uneasily at the little gem of a watch dangling on its ormolu and jasper stand. A quarter to one. Violet must have gone to bed hours ago; unless, indeed, Violet were like her mother, too unhappy to be able to sleep. Mrs. Tempest was seized with a sudden desire to see her daughter.

"How unkind of her never to come near me to say good-night, on this night of all others!" she thought. "What has she been doing all day, I wonder? Riding about the Forest, I suppose, like a wild girl, making friends of dogs, and horses, and gipsies, and all kinds of savage creatures."

And then after a pause she asked herself fretfully:

"What will people say if my own daughter is not at my wedding?"

The idea of possible slander stung her sharply. She got up, and walked up and down the room, inwardly complaining against providence for using her so badly. To have such a rebellious daughter! It was sharper than a serpent's tooth.

The time had not been allowed to go by without some endeavour being made to bring Violet to a better state of feeling. That was the tone taken about her by Mrs. Tempest and the vicar's wife in their conferences. The headstrong misguided girl was to be brought to a better state of mind. Mrs. Scobel tackled her, bringing all her diplomacy to bear, but without avail. Vixen was rock. Then Mr. Scobel undertook the duty, and, with all the authority of his holy office, called upon Violet to put aside her unchristian prejudices, and behave as a meek and dutiful daughter.

"Is it unchristian to hate the man who has usurped my father's place?" Violet asked curtly.

"It is unchristian to hate anyone. And you have no right to call Captain Winstanley a usurper. You have no reason to take your mother's marriage so much to heart. There is nothing sinful, or even radically objectionable in a second marriage; though I admit, that to my mind, a woman is worthier in remaining faithful to her first love; like Anna the prophetess, who had been a widow fourscore-and-four years. Who shall say that her exceptional gift of prophecy may not have been a reward for the purity and fidelity of her life?"

Mr. Scobel's arguments were of no more effect than his wife's persuasion. His heart was secretly on Violet's side. He had loved the squire, and he thought this marriage of Mrs. Tempest's a foolish, if not a shameful thing. There was no heartiness in the feeling with which he supervised the decoration of his pretty little church for the wedding.

"If she were only awake," thought Mrs. Tempest, "I would make a last appeal to her feelings, late as it is. Her heart cannot be stone."

She took her candle, and went through the dark silent house to Violet's room, and knocked gently.

"Come in," said the girl's clear voice, with a wakeful sound.

"Ah!" thought Mrs. Tempest triumphantly, "obstinate as she is, she knows

she is doing wrong. Conscience won't let her sleep."

Vixen was standing at her window, leaning with folded arms upon the broad wooden ledge, looking out at the dim garden, over which pale stars were shining. There was a moon, but it was hidden by drifting clouds.

"Not in bed, Violet," said her mother sweetly.

"No, mamma."

"What have you been doing all these hours?"

"I don't know—thinking."

"And you never came to wish me good-night."

"I did not think you would want me. I thought you would be busy packing—for your honeymoon."

"That was not kind, Violet. You must have known that I should have many painful thoughts to-night."

"I did not know it. And if it is so, I can only say it is a pity the painful thoughts did not come a little sooner."

"Violet, you are as hard as iron, as cold as ice!" cried Mrs. Tempest, with passionate fretfulness.

"No, I am not, mamma; I can love very warmly, where I love deeply. I have given this night to thoughts of my dead father, whose place is to be usurped in this house from to-morrow."

"I never knew anyone so obstinately unkind. I could not have believed it possible in my own daughter. I thought you had a good heart, Violet; and yet you do not mind making me intensely wretched on my wedding-day."

"Why should you be wretched, mamma, because I prefer not to be present at your wedding? If I were there, I should be like the bad fairy at the princess's christening. I should look at everything with a malevolent eye."

Mrs. Tempest flung herself into a chair and burst into tears.

The storm of grief, which had been brooding over her troubled mind all day, broke suddenly in a tempest of weeping. She could have given no reason for her distress; but all at once, on the eve of that day which was to give a new colour to her life, panic seized her, and she trembled at the step she was about to take.

"You are very cruel to me, Violet," she sobbed. "I am a most miserable woman."

Violet knelt beside her and gently took her hand, moved to pity by wretchedness so abject.

"Dear mamma, why miserable?" she asked. "This thing which you are doing is your own choice. Or, if it is not—if you have yielded weakly to over-persuasion—it is not too late to draw back. Indeed, it is not. Let us run away as soon as it is light, you and I, and go off to Spain, or Italy, anywhere, leaving a letter for Captain Winstanley, to say you have changed your mind. He could not do anything to us. You have a right to draw back, even at the last."

"Don't talk nonsense, Violet," cried Mrs. Tempest peevishly. "Who said I had changed my mind? I am as devoted to Conrad as he is to me. I should be a heartless wretch if I could throw him over at the last moment. But this has been a most agitating day. Your unkindness is breaking my heart."

"Indeed, mamma, I have no wish to be unkind—not to you. But my presence at your wedding would be a lie. It would seem to give my approval to an act I hate. I cannot bring myself to do that."

"And you will disgrace me by your absence. You do not care what people may say of me."

"Nobody will care about my absence. You will be the queen of the day."

"Everybody will care—everybody will talk. I know how malicious people are, even one's most intimate friends. They will say my own daughter turned her back upon me on my wedding-day."

"They can hardly say that, when I shall be here in your house."

Mrs. Tempest went on weeping. She had reduced herself to a condition in which it was much easier to cry than to leave off crying. The fountain of her tears seemed inexhaustible.

"A pretty object I shall look to-morrow," she murmured plaintively; and this was all she said for some time.

Violet walked up and down the room, sorely distressed, sorely perplexed. To see her mother's grief, and to be able to give comfort, and to refuse. That must be undutiful, undaughterly, rebellious. But had not her mother forfeited all right to her obedience? Were not their hearts and lives completely sundered by this marriage of to-morrow? To Violet's stronger nature it seemed as if she were the mother—offended, outraged by a child's folly and weakness. There sat the child, weeping piteously, yearning to be forgiven. It was a complete reversal of their positions.

Her heart was touched by the spectacle of her mother's weakness, by the mute appeal of those tears.

"What does it matter to me, after all, whether I am absent or present?" she argued at last. "I cannot prevent this man coming to take possession of my father's house. I cannot hinder the outrage to my father's memory. Mamma has been very kind to me—and I have no one else in the world to love."

She took a few more turns, and then stopped by her mother's chair.

"Will it really make you happier, mamma, if I am at your wedding?"

"It will make me quite happy."

"Very well, then; it shall be as you please. But, remember, I shall look like the wicked fairy. I can't help that."

"You will look lovely. Theodore has sent you home the most exquisite dress. Come to my room and try it on," said Mrs. Tempest, drying her tears, and as easily comforted as a child who has obtained its desire by means of copious weeping.

"No, dear mamma; not to-night. I'm too tired," sighed Violet.

"Never mind, dear. Theodore always fits you to perfection. Go to bed at once, love. The dress will be a surprise for you in the morning. Good-night, pet. You have made me so happy."

"I am glad of that, mamma."

"I wish you were going to Scotland with us." (Vixen shuddered.) "I'm afraid you'll be dreadfully dull here."

"No, mamma; I shall have the dogs and horses. I shall get on very well."

"You are such a curious girl. Well, good-night, darling. You are my own Violet again."

And with this they parted; Mrs. Tempest going back to her room with restored peace of mind.

She looked at the reflection of her tear-blotted face anxiously, as she paused before the glass.

"I'm afraid I shall look an object to-morrow," she said. "The morning sunshine is so searching."

A PICTURE OF SPANISH LIFE AND CHARACTER.

IN TWO PARTS. PART II.

SAN FULANO is early in its habits, especially as to that portion of the population which earns its living in the fields; the sun and the labourer rise together. Then follow

the tradespeople; and by seven all are afoot, even to the fashionable colonists from Madrid and the south. But it must not be imagined that female fashion makes its permanent appearance for the day at this hour. The *senoras* and *senoritas* have been awakened by the clanging summons to seven o'clock mass; and as San Fulano lies in the midst of a most devout country, they dare not, if they care for their souls—I should say, value public opinion—remain absent from the celebration. So, as tubbing is unknown, they slip yawningly from their beds into their high-heeled, embroidered slippers of bronzed leather. They robe themselves in a high-fitting, long-trained, ebon dress, which is caught in at the waist by a belt; the marvellous wealth of hair is gathered up into a mound, and held by a pin, which at the same time fastens the black lace mantilla, falling in such wise, that the unrefreshed sleep-haunted face is completely hidden. Their devotions at an end, they hurry back to chocolate, and usually remain immured within their chambers till the mid-day meal, which in the country is termed dinner. But it is not till after the siesta that the *senora* or *senorita* makes her public appearance, and then she blazes forth in the full splendour of a toilet, which is the result of hours of preparation, worked at bit by bit. Naturally, I am ignorant of the mysteries which occupy the greater portion of the day, but I am assured on credible authority that there is a far greater employment of cosmetics than of water; however, when my lady is dressed for her part, the outward result is very satisfactory to the eye.

The resident *caballeros* of San Fulano, and those who are merely summer visitors, with the exception of a few gliding rapidly down the hill of life, are not very assiduous in church attendance during the week—they are content to air their religion on Sundays. Chocolate absorbed, they get their journals from the post-office, and then betake them to the shady seats of the paseo by the riverside. While the politics of the day are being scanned, the quiet of the balmy summer morning remains undisturbed, but this peaceful interlude is of brief duration. Debating groups are gradually formed, each *caballero* waving his paper as the banner under which he fights, and a fierce, gesticulating, wordy strife is waged. There are Liberal Conservatives, the actual party in power, Constitutional

Liberals, Moderados Historicos, Democrats, and Radicals—the Absolutists, or Carlists, do not make much show. Well, not only does the excited throng number representatives of these various parties, but even fractions of each; for the more broadly defined political “platforms” in Spain have their numerous offshoots, making a most intricate puzzle, with which I will not vex the reader. And so the debaters, divided in opinion, surge and shout. They advance on each other under a cloud of cigarette-smoke, waving their respective banners as though a breach of the peace were inevitable; then they separate, walking to and fro excitedly, to come again into wordy collision when some crushing argument occurs to them. Finally, the various “platforms” group themselves apart, and mutter treasonable language, really believing, for the moment, that they are the centres of important conspiracies which are to upset the existing state of affairs, and bring their own party into power. And this simulation of sapping at the foundations of the government is intensely gratifying, for next to the national passion for gambling, the Spaniard dearly loves to conspire against everything and everybody. It is not only in San Fulano that this unhealthy disposition to overthrow those who for the moment rule the country is dominant. The same restless jealous temperament is common to the whole of Spain. All, in their way, are striving to seize the helm of the ship of state; and naturally, in the oft-repeated struggles, the spokes fly round, and the vessel is continually going to grief. I verily believe that if Santiago, the patron saint of the nation, held the reins of government, all the parties would unite and endeavour to dispossess him.

I cannot do better here than repeat some remarks made to me by one of my most intimate acquaintances, a Spanish gentleman, who knows his countrymen well, and who, strange to say, speaks his mind honestly. He has more than once held responsible positions in different parts of the Peninsula, and, in addition, his mind has been healthily developed by foreign travel. He happens at this moment to be enjoying the mountain freshness, of which San Fulano is the centre, and I esteem myself fortunate in meeting him again.

We were strolling one morning under the trees of the paseo, occasionally pausing to watch the excited politicians, who, if possible, were more energetic than ever.

I made some observations in reference to the numerous parties which divided Spain, and the passion which seemed to dominate, even in such a comparatively friendly meeting as that we were witnessing; and added that, so far as my experience went, the whole country seemed to be ever stewing in the political pan, and not unfrequently, as a natural result, getting into the fire. I also remarked that I thought the voice of agitation might be occasionally hushed from patriotic motives, and that the government should have a chance given it of working out its programme honestly, if such were possible.

"Patriotic motives!" exclaimed my companion; "patriotism is a word which has long been eliminated from the Spanish dictionary. You see the ex-colonial governor there, expounding his views to a knot of fellows. Well, a few years ago, he was a nobody, occupying a very humble position indeed; and now, as you are aware, he is a rich man, with a Madrid residence, and yonder tree-embowered palacio. But he was one of those restless intriguing spirits, endowed with a certain energy, that generally manage in some way to come to the surface. His lucky star brought him into contact with a leading party man in the Cortes, who, noticing his talent and aptitude for intrigue, got him, by using various influences, returned as deputy. Of course there was a compact between them; it being understood that the ex-governor was to work for his protector, and if the cards they were to play turned up trumps, why he would not be forgotten.

"Well, our friend, once in the house, manipulated the wires so successfully, that the party leader found himself each day surrounded by additional supporters, and finally his strength became so great that he reached the highest position in the ministry. His right hand man there, who helped him to climb the ladder of state, was shortly appointed to the governorship of an important colony, and though he only enjoyed the position for something like a month, he returned to Spain with the foundation of his present great fortune. His protector being still in power, he was given, for a time, the control of the Treasury, which office materially added to his wealth. At present he and his chief are thrown out, and they are working and intriguing with all their might to get another innings. You will not, I presume, admit that such men are actuated by

patriotism. They only espouse a party with a view to benefiting themselves, when that party obtains the direction of affairs. No, *amigo mio*, this unfortunate country is at the mercy of a series of firms of political hucksters, who certainly are not guided by patriotic motives. Their ambition is not to see the nation solvent, respected, and powerful in its unity; they simply treat the question of politics as a commercial one, and their only desire is their own advantage, and not that of the state at large. To imagine that any of the members of these different parties have a real political creed, would be a mistake—one and all are ready to fight in the opposite camp, should their claims be ignored on their party coming into power."

"This is but a sorry picture that you paint of your country," observed I; "from your remarks one would infer that there are few honest men in Spain."

"That is just it—very few that are honest, whatever policy they may affect; and the misfortune is that when success places them in a high position, it does not reform them. I am sometimes inclined to think that an autocratic government, controlled by a strong hand, is the only solution to our miserable condition. We want a man of iron will and fearless character, capable of seizing and throttling this many-headed political hydra. Were such an one, of honest and inflexible purpose, to rise amongst us, I am convinced he would receive the nation's support, for the people know how sadly they are used—I may say robbed—by those who pretend to legislate for them, and they are wretchedly conscious that when one party has had its day, it will be replaced by another actuated by much the same motives. Can there be a better example of this condition of affairs than that shown by our government stock? The country is at peace internally, the Carlist rising has long since been stamped out, and the Cuban revolt may be said to have terminated. Yet look at the quotations of state securities, fluctuating daily to the miserable extent of a few centimes, but never denoting a healthy disposition to recover their long-lost value. For instance, I have eighty thousand pesetas of my little fortune thus invested, and if I desired to realise my capital I could not obtain twenty thousand, and I am only one of a million thus mulcted. There is no confidence. The nation has been so handled and robbed, that it holds aloof from everything in the shape of

Spanish government stock; and the money of the country, instead of increasing the national wealth, now goes for investment to France or England."

Here my companion paused to roll and light a cigarette, then, puffing out a cloud of fleecy vapour, he continued:

"Look at those officers grouped apart and speaking earnestly—there again is cause for anxiety. The army is being reduced, and a very large proportion of the commissioned members are to be sent to their homes on a greatly reduced pay. Many of them reached their grade during the late civil war, and, believing their career assured, married. The result is, that those who are designated for removal from active service will have to starve, with their wives, through life as best they can. The greater number, you must have noticed, are comparatively young men. Do you think for a moment that they will settle down quietly to enforced poverty? For my part I am certain they will not; and sooner or later we shall hear of conspiracies, aided and abetted by military men, whose only object will be to create a struggle, that they may again find employment in the butchering line. Now, as the sun is getting hot, and I have letters to write, you must excuse me. A Dios."

As the heat becomes sensible on the paseos, despite the overshadowing foliage, the excited caballeros calm, for a time, their party passions, and seek the dark cooler shelter of the shops, where they gather in knots to discuss the scandal of the neighbourhood. I must confess I was at first greatly surprised at witnessing such groupings in the towns and cities through which I passed. If I desired to purchase some necessary article, I had to make my way through a dozen or so of smoking loungers, which made the acquisition of a shirt or a pair or two of socks a very disagreeable business to a bashful individual. Gentlemen at home seldom enter shops unless compelled to do so, and certainly they would never think of choosing them as desirable places in which to while away an hour or two before lunch time. And when one takes into consideration the fact that the shops of San Fulano are ill-lit, obscure dens—evil smelling from, as already described, the close neighbourhood of the stable, in which filth of every kind is allowed to accumulate for months—one is the more surprised. But as the Spanish caballero merely crosses his own threshold

for the purposes of eating and sleeping, he seeks, when not gambling at the casino, distraction wherever it is offered. The notion of giving a few hours to mental culture never occurs to him, and the last thing he is likely to take up is a book. His sole reading is the brief perusal of his paper, and, as a natural consequence, his general knowledge is woefully limited, and his ideas travel in a very narrow groove indeed. And so a portion of the morning is given to scandal-mongering and evil-speaking generally; the caballero not disdaining to usurp the woman's prerogative of indulging in futile mischievous speech. Jealousy is a Spanish characteristic; and though two men may outwardly have the appearance of being devoted friends, each will find something to say to the other's disparagement behind his back.

At mid-day comes the comida or dinner, a frugal and frequently scant meal in the family of the poorer gentleman, whose limited income, honestly and carefully expended, might perhaps furnish the means of living modestly and with comfort. But the curse of gambling brings with it misery, and a dire struggle to maintain those appearances, failing which the Spanish caballero would be dishonoured in his own and society's estimation. At home there may be an empty larder, and, comparatively speaking, bare walls; but abroad he and his wife and daughters must make a brave show, no matter at what cost of suffering and privation within the poverty-oppressed dwelling. With the wealthier the comida is simple enough, seldom varying in character from year's end to year's end. Indeed, the ordinary family cook has no pretensions to touch even the hem of the cordon bleu; and as gastronomy in its higher culture is neither appreciated or understood by the generality of Spaniards, the kitchen remains as far behind the age as the nation. Besides, it is not customary—despite the unmeaning compliment which is on everybody's lips as the hour for dining draws nigh—to receive guests. It is only on the occasion of a great fiesta that friends are invited to the table, and then profusion, rather than perfection, is studied. It must be remembered I am speaking of middle-class society generally, and not of the higher fashion of the capital, which, of course, lives very much as those whom they emulate live in Paris or London.

By two in the afternoon San Fulano is as hushed as the dead dwellings by the

Nile. There is no movement in the sun-stricken streets, the very pigs seeking shelter from the sun beneath the stone archways, and imitating the siesta which has drowsily fallen on all. The tiendas are closed, and the labourer in the outlying fields is sleeping in the broad shadow of some widely-spreading oak. A vapoury heat is dancing in the valley, and circling the lower slopes of the mountains with a delicate azure mist, while the rugged granite peaks, boldly sculptured by deep-cast shadows, stand out decisively from the speckless sky.

It is not till four that the pueblo again shows signs of life, and then the caballeros of the morning, reinforced by the better class of tradesmen, betake them to the casino, where, with the exception of a brief interlude for a cup of chocolate, they will steadily gamble till the hour of the cena, or supper, draws nigh, generally nine o'clock. The poor man may have probably come with his last available gold piece, knowing that, if it is lost, the dire shifts at home will become harder to bear. The tradesman, inflated with a certain purse-pride, frequently stakes and loses more than he can afford, even to the extent of compromising his commercial position; and the wealthier individual, if fortune is against him, but the more vehemently puffs at his cigarette, while if he wins, he knows that it is perhaps the money that should go to buy food for an already pinched family. The vice of gambling would seem to be born in the Spanish race. Children of all classes, from five years of age and upwards, stake the coppers that have been given to them openly on the plaza, and I have seen them disputing over a contested cuarto on the steps of the church, while mass was being performed within the building. And I have seen the priests sweep by without a word of expostulation, but this is hardly to be wondered at, as the priests themselves are by no means free from the besetting sin.

By the time the sun begins to wane, senoras and señoritas, in all the bravery of a carefully-studied toilet, make their appearance on the chequer-shadowed paseo, and so powerful is the new attraction, that many of the younger caballeros are induced to leave, for a period, the seductive influence of the gaming-table. As I have already remarked, no matter how the result is obtained, the outward show is eminently satisfactory. Even if a Spanish woman is not pretty, which, when young, is seldom

the case, she carries a charm with her which never fails to assert itself. Her figure is rounded and graceful—she has, unfortunately, a tendency in after years to grow stout—and her bearing such that no other race of women I know of can pretend to. The little arched foot treads the ground lightly but proudly, and her step and carriage are the very poetry of motion. The robe, which has generally a sweeping train, is worn somewhat clingingly, showing the contour of the form, but not impeding free action in every movement. A gauzy mantilla, falling artistically from the admirably-arranged luxuriant tresses, is the simple head-dress, with perhaps the addition of a rose or camelia, planted just where one would have it. And she carries a dangerous, and often killing weapon, which in other hands but hers loses its power—the fan. How it opens and shuts with a dexterous, yet careless turn of the ivory wrist; how it taps the pink tips of the dimpled fingers, to give emphasis to some arch expression; how in the sun-glare it is spread, and poised gracefully as a shield against the rays; how, when desirous of addressing, unnoticed, a gallant, and stabbing him with a glance of the lustrous eyes, it is made to act as a screen; how, by an almost imperceptible movement, it beckons an expectant but irresolute admirer; how it imposes silence on some too presuming caballero, by being passed lightly over the speaker's lips; how it indicates impatience in its quick fluttering; and how it is sometimes so manipulated, that its softly-cadenced breath fans both the wielder and the supremely happy lover. Yes; the Spanish woman is by no means deficient of the elementary powers of fascination, and if one can only induce her to descend from the realms of artificial complimentary speech, and to speak naturally, she is perfectly charming. She has a fashion of saying what she thinks—in this she differs from the lords of her race—and of calling a spade a spade. She is bright, and even sparkling in her badinage, which, however, seldom rises above triviality; and if one would not break the momentary attractive spell, one should never attempt to change the superficial character of the conversation.

The little education she possesses has been obtained within the walls of a convent, and I think I am right in stating that the profane instruction never goes beyond reading, writing, the simpler rules of arithmetic, and music, though years

are devoted to cramming her with the lives of saints and the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church. Of history she knows absolutely nothing, and her geography does not extend beyond her own usually limited travelling experiences. As to art and literature, the terms have no signification to her unprepared mind, and it is very doubtful, in the greater number of cases, if in after years the brain becomes more fertilised by reading. She only deals with surrounding familiar objects, and these, as subjects of conversation, are playfully and amusingly handled. Her *espèglerie* and coquetry make her most winsome, and, as already suggested, she is largely endowed with the elementary powers of fascination. Indeed, I cannot conceive a more pleasurable way of passing a charming quarter of an hour than a saunter on the paseo of San Fulano, with a not too strictly *duenna*-guarded damsel.

Married, the senora manages to pass through life without scandal, though no woman lives more apart from her husband. If, in her walks abroad, a young and attentive caballero is ready and obedient to her commands, none but the most wickedly disposed would dream of casting a stone. She has been brought up in the strict observance of the religion of her Church, and so long as she attends its ceremonies, and enjoys the good opinion of her spiritual adviser, who is also her confessor, no one dare whisper a word of slander. It is her lord's pleasure to seek his amusements away from home, and the only duty which is expected of her is to make herself pleasant and agreeable to her liege when he honours the house with his presence.

As evening closes in, and darkness commences to spread its mantle over mountain and valley, the paseo is gradually forsaken for the supper-table—a meal that is quickly disposed of, for the senoras have either to receive or to visit. It is in the *Belgravia* of San Fulano, in the houses of the wealthier colonists, that really charming *tertulias* are held; and one family is especially famous for its weekly assemblies. A suite of rooms, lightly yet elegantly furnished, open on to a broad stone terrace, embroidered by a band of multicoloured flowers, that fill the still atmosphere with their fragrance. Flights of steps descend to a richly-kept garden, with its plashing fountain, perfumed parterres, and avenues of arched foliage that lead to the riverbank; while beyond is a

stretch of valley that sweeps to the feet of the towering heights, which rise dark and mysterious on the star-twinkling background. Intensely enjoyable are these gatherings in such a season as that of which I write, when the pale moon

Frees her from a fleece of cloud,
And swims along the deep blue sea of heaven
On sweet June nights.

Once the formal compliments and initiative etiquette of the reception disposed of, one seems to have passed from the stilted, false world of the Spaniard, and to have entered another life. Senoras, knowing that it is their hour, use it most captivatingly; and the *senoritas*, freed from *duenna* surveillance, display to admiration their fascinating powers. Even the *caballeros*, for a moment, lay aside their pompous bearing, and appear to have become oblivious of politics and gambling. Of "tall" talk there is none, for reasons I have described; and though the conversation never rises above the simple subjects connected with daily life, yet there is not wanting a seasoning of "*Sal Andaluz*." There is an utter absence of anything approaching affectation, and a stranger is at first startled by the natural and unreserved fashion in which ladies allude to matters that would be banished from an English and even French drawing-room.

But the great attraction of these *tertulias* is the music; and San Fulano, during its season, can boast of the presence of artists who are renowned in the salons of Madrid and in the cities of *Andalucia*. Ah, it is supremely delicious in the soft moonlight, with charming companions on either side, fluttering their fans and speaking in whispers, to half recline amidst the flowers of the terrace, to savour the aroma of a Cuban cigarette, to listen dreamily to a wild melancholy romance of almost oriental character, and to beat time to the sparkling movement of a bolero or fandango, played as a duet between guitar and mandolin, and accompanied by the snapping of the castanets! Sometimes a space is cleared in the mellow-lit rooms, and *caballeros* and *senoritas* step proudly and gracefully to the measure of the *Habanera* or *Jota Aragonese*. And so the summer night passes pleasantly, till the deep chimes from the Moorish tower proclaim the hour of twelve, and, as the last echo dies away, closes the, to me, most charming chapter of Spanish daily life, as I have studied it in the mountain-shadowed, quaint old town of San Fulano.

LOVE ME, LOVE MY DOG.

A STORY IN SIX CHAPTERS. CHAPTER III.

THE misunderstandings of unavowed lovers are, of all others, most persistent, least comprehensible, and least open to happy solution.

Amos Hedley and Hope Wolsingham saw just so much of each other as served to widen the gap between them, and not enough to bridge it over; yet, with the perverse inconsistency of human nature, the attachment of each became stronger as there seemed less likelihood of a mutual understanding.

Servants both, with set duties and hard work before them from one week's end to another, they had no leisure to ruminate with folded hands, and grow morbidly sentimental, but the heartache was not the less real and deep. The few days' intercourse at the farm, when the man was helpless and the woman tenderly helpful, had raised hopes which only lacked confirmation.

Alas, for hope! Their first meeting set doubt in its place, and doubt is an enemy not easily dislodged.

The brown and crimson leaves of October had grown dingy under the chilly breath of young November, and lay in sodden heaps under the dripping trees when the light frost gave way before mist and rain.

Amos, in attendance on Sir William, came and went from the park to the moors, the nearest way to which rounded the corner of the farmyard and crossed the Applegarth meadows, and had frequent opportunities to say a word in passing to whomsoever chanced to be about; and as they mostly passed at milking-time, whether morning or evening, and the dogs gave notice of their approach, it needed little contrivance to bring Hope within speaking distance on these occasions. But as milking-time came close upon feeding and foddering-time, big Geordie Applegarth was generally there also with his pitchfork, or pails of swill for the porkers, and being fond of a gossip, effectually prevented any private tête-à-tête.

Geordie was sublimely unconscious of intrusion, but Amos read in his constant presence an intentional intervention and supervision of Hope only compatible with ulterior designs of his own, and resented it accordingly.

He had carried the bright ribbons in his pocket, hoping to find a favourable moment for their presentation; but un-

certain how his offering might be received, he could not risk it with that raw-boned fellow at her elbow. So the silken love-gift came and went away with him, until, in high displeasure at George Applegarth's association with Hope, he began to pass without glancing towards the farm-gate even when alone. Nay, if Gipsy were with him, and evinced a desire to run beneath the bars and have a little quiet frolic with Hope, whose plump hand was always ready to stroke his head, a shrill and prolonged whistle summoned the grateful animal away before he could lick her hand in return.

Under this fresh slight Hope decided that Amos was ungrateful, that he was not worth thinking about, and that she would not waste another thought upon him. But she thought of little else. True, she kept out of sight when he was near, but she watched for his coming from behind the dairy lattice, and sighed when he was gone.

Hers was not a fading colour, but its brightness paled; she lost her spirits and her appetite, and then Dame Applegarth took notice of the change.

Hope insisted it was only due to the weather, but the good dame thought otherwise, and decided that her maid should have a holiday for the purpose of consulting her grandmother, the doctress, and bringing back such herbs and simples as their own garden might not afford.

Betty Wolsingham, when at home, which was but seldom, occupied a small cottage in a sort of rift, high on the side of Black Fell. Other cottages, chiefly inhabited by pitmen and their families, were scattered here and there, singly or in groups. Hers stood alone and aloof, under the shelter of a grey rock, and was distinguished by a small patch of garden-ground, in which Betty reared a few vegetables and such medicinal herbs as would flourish with little cultivation.

A clear spring of pure water trickled from the rock behind, and ran away in a thin rillet down the hillside, leaping in spray here and there until it lost itself in a wider burn, inky as the coal deposits whence it flowed.

Burnhead was little more than three miles from Derwentside, but three miles of rugged, pathless road over moor and fell, intersected with yawning caverns in the shape of old and abandoned coal-pits, with gorse and whin to impede progress if the "blind-path" be deserted; three miles, I say, of such road might well

count as six. So Dame Applegarth must have felt when she filled with fresh butter, new-laid eggs, a piece of bacon, and a pie, a basket for Hope to carry to her grandmother, and hurried the girl off early on the Saturday afternoon, with strict injunctions not to return until the next day, when she was to start early from Burnhead, lest the mists of evening should overtake her before she got home.

Hope took the basket and trudged off, hardly feeling its weight; perhaps her heart was the heavier of the two, for as she left the house-door she saw Amos Hedley at the copse-gate, and though his foot advanced as if to meet her, he stepped back, and the sudden smile died out from his face.

She had not seen Gilbert Applegarth and Geordie together watching her from the farmyard, or heard, as Amos had, the farmer's words to his son as he slapped him on the back encouragingly with one hand, and pointed at the same time to the figure going towards the village with the other.

"Theer's a canny lass fur thee, Gwordie, nivvor her marrow in all Durwham."

A canny lass, indeed, under the grey duffel cloak, with the gipsy hat tied down so closely and modestly under her chin, so as to cover her ears, and shadow her face from either glaring sun or staring eyes.

There was little sun to stare at her that November afternoon, and the few pitmen she met, with their picks over their shoulders, and their empty bait-pokes slung behind, merely said, "Gude-den, hinny," and passed on.

Never had the road to her grandmother's seemed so long and wearisome. Either she was really ill, or had been disheartened at the first start, for before she had gone half the distance she sat down to rest on a boulder grey and yellow with lichen, and put her basket beside her, glad to be relieved of the weight.

As she sat there pondering what Amos Hedley really thought about her, and whether it was true he was courting the laundry-maid at the hall, and whether it would be wise to mention him at all to her old grandmother, ruminating in a desultory sort of way, looking absently before her across the fell the while, she saw a figure approaching in the distance, and suddenly recognised the disreputable tinker, Nick Faw. She snatched up her basket in the instant and hastened along,

with steps no longer retarded by love-dreams, but quickened by apprehension.

Apparently he was not journeying her way, for, on looking back after awhile, distance or the inequalities of the road hid him from view.

Greatly to Hope's disappointment, Betty Wolsingham's cottage was closed. Its owner was evidently abroad smoothing someone's way either into the world or out of it, for the door was locked, which was never the case during temporary absence.

What should she do now? Go back she must, and that without delay; but she was already tired, and had no mind to carry a heavy load back with her. There was a small stone bench outside the cottage, and here she seated herself to consider—not the expanded prospect before her, but her own.

The walk had given her an appetite. Congratulating herself on the pork-pie in her basket, she broke down its wall of paste without ceremony, and finding a tin dipper at the back of the cottage, helped herself to a draught of water from the spring.

She then tried both casements, but they had been carefully secured, so there was no chance of emptying her basket on the window-seat within. Her only plan was to leave the things and a message with Betty's nearest neighbour—a collier's wife, who lived some four hundred yards away down the burn-side. This would take her out of her way, but it would be better than going back so laden.

So resolving, she again lifted her basket, this time with a little sigh of weariness; but the afternoon was advancing, and, though she knew every foot of the road, the knowledge came with the consciousness that it was safest trodden before the shadows closed in.

From the collier's wife she ascertained that her grandmother had only left home the previous day, and had fastened up her cottage because there were some "uncanny chaps hingin' an' keekin' about."

Hope's heart gave a leap as she thought of Nick Faw, and was half-inclined to accept the woman's hospitable invitation to remain there until morning. She had, however, too clear a perception of the already overcrowded state of the pitman's hut to add to its inconvenience. Contenting herself with leaving the comestibles behind for the woman's own use, reserving only the bacon for her grandmother, with many profuse apologies for rejecting the hospitality

pressed upon her, she turned her face homeward, not without calculating how far she should be able to travel before darkness came to obscure her path.

A stout heart had Hope. Setting fatigue aside, she stepped forward resolutely, with the grey hood of her cloak drawn over her hat, and the empty basket swinging in her hand to the motion of her feet. It was anything but a straight or a defined path: here and there she followed the downward course of the burn, once or twice she crossed the running water with a bound, now she traversed a precipitous ledge of rock, anon a cleft in which the day was quenched, and from which she only emerged to find the twilight deepening, and a thick mist blotting the outlines of the landscape. She was glad when she reached the open moorland, and knew that more than half the distance was traversed. For the first time she stopped to rest, leaning against a low grey ridge of stone whilst she shook the chafing sand and pebbles out of her shoes.

As if the very stoppage had conjured up a "bogle," she heard a loud halloo, which was answered by a rough voice, apparently on the other side the ridge, and within two yards of the spot where she stood.

Neither the call nor the answer were in choice language; but what made her heart sink was that the man hailed had answered to the name of "Nick," and that she could not pursue her road without being seen as soon as she reached the dip of the slaty screen of stone.

Hope's breath came and went. The spot was lonely. The man had an evil name, and his friends were tarred with the same brush. She was equally at a loss whether to advance or retreat, and indeed was half afraid to stir lest the crunch of loose stone beneath her tread might tell of her presence.

And now she felt that even the gathering fog was a friend to her; she might be able to pass the end of the ridge under its veil. There was no danger on the moors she dreaded in comparison with those men, of whom she had had a shuddering horror since the day she saw young Amos Hedley so bruised and battered by their brutality.

As she paused in fear and uncertainty she heard Nick Faw abuse the others for keeping him waiting so long in the cold. Then there was a gurgling sound as of liquor passing from a bottle-neck down

someone's throat, and then—well might she hold her breath and listen with mouth agape—all the details were discussed of a well-laid plan to break into Derwentside Hall on the Monday night, and carry off whatever plate and valuables they could lay their hands on, any opposition on the part of the inmates to be silenced by the knife.

Hope's ears and nerves were strained to the uttermost, her dread of discovery increased by the weight of the secret now in her keeping, and she longed to hear the men depart and leave the path open to her.

Presently there was a move, a move that appalled her. Nick Faw announced his intention to return to Black Fell. If he did, he must turn the corner of the ridge, and not even the fog would hide if he brushed against her.

Resolution came quick as thought. Gathering herself together she darted off like an arrow from the string, passed the dip of the rock unseen, if not unheard, in the fog, and barely caught the startled "What be yan?" or the jeering reply, "A hare, mon! Div ye think it be auld Clootie?" as away she scudded with all the celerity of fear and its reckless lack of perception.

In the one dread of pursuit she kept her course, though she could scarcely see a yard before her, and landmarks had disappeared.

Soon she had a dim consciousness that she had lost her way, and moved forward with more caution. Now she began to wish she had accepted the horn-lantern offered by the pitman's wife, that she might scan the path before her feet, and distinguish bushes from boulders. She was worn out with fatigue, terror, and anxiety, and what wonder if she also wished for the arm of Amos to sustain her, as she stumbled at every step? All at once her spirits rose; she fancied she discerned a well-known clump of bushes through which ran a narrow footpath leading direct to the village, and Hope congratulated herself on being so near home.

Yes; there was the gap between the gorse. She put her foot confidently forward—a shriek pierced the fog! She was going dizzily down, down into depths of unutterable darkness!

CHAPTER IV.

A QUICK shock, a sense of rapid descent, a feeling of stifling suffocation, of a head

swollen to bursting, dizziness, appalling terror, a retrospective vision of life, a horror of death, a plunge into cold water, a return to consciousness! Hope was struggling instinctively in the treacherous element which had saved her life by breaking her tremendous fall, and now threatened to engulf her. Had she known that she was thirty fathoms below the surface of the moor, she would have given up hope, and been lost; but though the water rushed into her mouth and drowned her cries for help, and though her woollen cloak was heavy and clung to her, she struggled to keep her head free, and, in struggling, her open hand struck the rugged side of the pit and grasped it tenaciously. Slight as was the hold, it supported her to strike her feet downward and find solid ground beneath them, and now the water came only to her armpits—she could breathe again.

Half afraid to move a step in the pitchy darkness, she raised her voice again, only to hear her call reverberate as it rose, and to feel how hopeless was her situation. Yet she groped with one hand along the wall, and strove to find a higher level for her foot.

At length her hand struck against a projection just above her head. It was a piece of timber, a kind of beam, doubtless one of the supports of the shaft when that had first been sunk for coal. At the full stretch of her arm she contrived to grip it firmly; and so, holding fast by the left hand, with the other she loosened the fastening of her saturated cloak and let it go. Relieved of its dragging weight, she threw up her right hand also to the beam, and clinging firmly with the strength born of despair, planted her feet against the rough wall of the shaft, and foot by foot—the water buoying her up—raised herself higher and higher, until, with a supreme effort, she swung herself across the beam.

The position was painful and critical. She had no light to guide her. In gaining the beam she had lost her foothold of the wall, and so great was the pressure on her waist, she felt assured she must drop unless she could scramble into a sitting posture.

After one or two narrow mischances, which sent her heart leaping into her throat, she attained her object, and thanked God for comparative safety.

Yet was her situation little less perilous. The beam had not more than the circumference of a man's hat-crown, and her sole

support being the side of the shaft, her seat was necessarily very insecure, added to which her feet were yet in the cramping water, her strength was well-nigh gone, and with the temporary rest a sense of drowsiness stole over her.

Fortunately hunger came to keep her awake, and with it longings for the half-eaten pie left at the collier's cottage. So far, struggles for immediate safety had overpowered every other thought and feeling; but now the desolation and hopelessness of her position smote Hope.

Of times she could take no note. It was the 27th of November, and its fog was thick enough to blot out moon and stars, had either hung above that old pit-mouth. Not until day had fully chased the mists and shadows, did a glimmering patch of light high up above her tell her that only one night had gone. To her it seemed as if the darkness was perpetual, and she had been there treble the time.

During the night she had contrived to raise her feet out of the icy water, and extend them before her on the beam; but they were almost numb, and she shivered in her wet clothes.

With her hungry longings had come thoughts of all the good things at the farm to tantalise her; and then the knowledge that she would not be missed until the Sunday night set in; and she began to question her own powers of endurance, and to wonder if she could hold out until they began to search for her. She wondered, too, how long it would be before Amos Hedley heard that she was missing, and if he would join in the search.

And then, as if conjured up by the thought of Amos, came in a flash over her mind the dreadful plot she had overheard, and the danger which threatened his master's household, and perchance himself. In the consciousness that she held a secret on which both life and property might hang, her hunger was for the time forgotten, and feverish longing to escape and warn Sir William overpowered all else.

She screamed until she was hoarse, but only her own voice came back to her; and as the hours went slowly by, and her clothes dried upon her, she grew parched and doubly feverish. To quench her intolerable thirst, she drew gently up the tail of her linen gown, which hung below drabbling in the water, and sucked the moisture out; but it had to be done with caution, lest she should overbalance.

And ever and anon she shrieked for

"help" and "Amos," but neither came; though another night wore out, and another day passed its meridian. She grew clamorous for food, fever was gaining upon her, and after lapses into despairing silence, her cries grew sharp and shrill.

Not until the day began to wane, and the gathering shadows sent home the farmer and his son to their Sunday evening meal, did Dame Applegarth evince any surprise at her maid's long absence. Then she began to remark that Hope was late, that it was not safe for a girl to wander on the fells after dark, and threatened to rebuke her when she did get home.

But when night began to show a black face at the diamonded casement, and the flames of the blazing fire leapt up to light the kitchen with reflections in polished oak and pewter, she looked uneasily out, and bade "Gwordie tak a lanthorn, and leet th' canny bairn through the mirk."

Geordie seemed somewhat loth to stir himself, but he never dreamed of disputing his mother's behests; so he reached a horn lantern from a hook behind the door, carefully lit and adjusted the bit of home-made candle within, closed the lantern deliberately, and, with a stick in one hand, set off on his errand, nothing doubting he should meet her before his long legs had carried him the length of the village.

Before he had gone far he met various parties of young fellows returning from the fell, some with game-cocks under their arms, others with bandy-sticks, or trigs; cock-fighting, bandy, trippet-and-coit, and other gambling games, making the fell-side like a fair on Sunday afternoons.

Several of these he questioned, but no one had seen or overtaken Hope, and when he had gone little more than a mile he turned back, satisfied in his own mind that she had stayed with her old grandmother. He was not gallant, and he wanted his supper.

He was, however, away quite long enough to add to his mother's uneasiness, without allaying it. She had never known Hope so far behind time in all the years of her long service; the lass had been like a daughter to her; and unpunctuality in her mind portended evil.

As Geordie came back down the village street, the light of the lantern gleamed on the white mutch, or long-eared linen cap, of his mother, as her head was stretched over the gate and her anxious "Where's Hope?" greeted him.

The question, and the short "Aw din-net ken," with the longer assurance which followed that she must be "steyin' wiv auld Betty, for sarten!" being asked and answered from a distance, reached the ears of another watcher across the road. From the copse-gate, which he had already unfastened, came Amos Hedley, equipped for night-duty, with his gun over his shoulder.

From the tenour of his questions it would seem he was no better satisfied with Geordie's excuse than was Dame Applegarth, or the farmer, who joined them at the gate; and, but that the gamekeeper's duty tied him to his master's woods all night, he would himself have set off to put anxiety to rest, although the farmer assured him it "wad be kittle wark for a stranger te gan ower th' fell after neet-fa'; an' th' wench meet be syef enoof efter a'."

In that "might be" the good dame and Amos were compelled to look for hope, for Geordie showed no disposition for another march in search of his mother's dairymaid. But Amos watched that night with an impatience for the dawn he had rarely known before.

Instead of retiring to rest when the hour came to report himself to the head keeper, he swallowed in haste a glass of ale, thrust a hunch of bread and cheese in his coat-pocket, and was off on his self-appointed errand to Burnhead.

Geordie's nonchalance had allayed his jealousy, but not his fears or his love, and the restlessness which had gathered force during the night, gave speed to his flying feet, and made his possible reception a matter of small moment.

Disappointment awaited him at Betty's cottage, as it had awaited Hope. A pair of robins were breakfasting on the crumbs left from Hope's repast, but doors and windows were alike secured, and no hospitable smoke curled from the low chimney-top.

He stood hesitating; the crumbs were an assurance that someone had been there but recently. Possibly Hope and her grandmother had together quitted the cottage that very morning, and gone to make a neighbourly call before the former returned to the farm.

He cast his eyes around and singled out a cottage for enquiry, overleaping rock and burn in his impatient descent. It chanced to be the one Hope had gone out of her way to visit.

"Aye, Hope hed ben theer, suir enoof, but nowt wad gar her stop;" then observant of the ghastly change in her questioner's face, the woman added the kindly consolation that she might have stopped somewhere else farther down the fell when she found the fog coming on, and would most likely have reached home before then.

Alternately hoping and fearing, he hurried back after thanking his informant, turning aside from the trodden path, with tireless foot and expectant voice, towards every shepherd's hut or pitman's cottage within range, wherever it seemed feasible the girl he now loved so dearly might have sought a night's shelter and hospitality in emergency.

But, oh! how haggard was the face Amos presented when he burst into Farmer Applegarth's house, about eleven that Monday forenoon, and found his last hope extinguished on their hearth.

Not seeing Hope, or a sign of her, in the farm-yard, or in the empty kitchen, he rushed on to the dairy, where dame Applegarth was skimming the milk, too much concerned at her maid's absence to complain of the extra work. At the first accents of his hurried enquiry, the first glimpse of his anxious face, she dropped the wooden bowl of cream from her hands, and clasped them together on her breast in consternation, as she cried in echo to his hasty explanation: "Nut theer! and nut seen sin Setterday efternoon! Aw telt Gwordie somethin' wor wrang; aw wur suir of it! Whativer con hev fa'en the lass?"

Out ran the quiet woman into the farm-yard, calling for Gilbert and Geordie in a state of unusual excitement. Then she recollected that "the daft callont wor gyen te th' smiddy," and, whilst Amos darted across the road, and bounded over the copse-gate into the wood, she flew up the straggling street to seek her son, remembering only that Hope had gone away at her bidding, that Geordie had been luke-warm overnight, and feeling much as if whatever had happened to the girl would lie at their door.

The excitement spread. Staid Dame Applegarth could not rush up the village without bringing wives to their doors, and children after them. "Lost on Black Fell in the fog two days sin," roused many a sturdy pitman who worked on the night-shift from his forenoon dreams, to join the impromptu band of searchers

who were off, along with the farmer and Geordie, long before Amos returned with leave of absence granted, and limping Gipsy at his heels.

THE CHARLTON HUNT.

IN the bosom of the South Downs, midway between Chichester and Midhurst, lies the secluded little village of Charlton, which, for more than a hundred years, was the Melton Mowbray of our forefathers. Immediately above it is the Goodwood racecourse; around it is the Charlton Forest. A hundred years ago Goodwood was a place nobody had heard of; everybody knew of Charlton, at least, by repute.

In 1749, the Duke of Richmond happened to be staying at a hunting-box he had lately built near Charlton, when the assizes were held at Chichester. As in duty bound, he entertained the judges. The little house at Goodwood has since expanded and become of world-wide fame, and it is not now spoken of, as it was then, as a house the duke had built near Charlton for the convenience of hunting.

The land at and around Charlton had formerly belonged to the Norfolk family, the Fitzalans, Earls of Arundel, whose hunting-box was at Downley, on the verge of the forest, where two earls died in the years 1525 and 1544. After the discovery of fox-hunting, a meet was always held at Charlton, whose broad delightful downs had been long before devoted to amusements of a kindred character.

It owed its later celebrity to the combined efforts of the Duke of Monmouth and his friend Ford, Lord Grey of Uppark, who kept two packs of hounds between them here.

Monmouth used to say, when he was king, he would come and keep his court at Charlton. His popularity throughout the neighbourhood was as great as it deserved to be; he was not then a pretender to the crown, and he was a supporter of fox-hounds; consequently he was received at Chichester, on his arrival for hunting in February, 1679, with such boisterous bell-ringing and bonfiring, that Bishop Carleton wrote an apology to the archbishop in London, hoping this conduct would not be interpreted as manifesting any want of loyalty on the part of his majesty's most devoted subjects at Chichester, than whom, &c. &c.

It happened that Mr. Edward Roper, of Eltham, Kent, was among the gentlemen who paid their respects to Monmouth on the occasion of the excessive bell-ringing; and he afterwards became the master and manager of the duke's fox-hounds, and fled with him to France after his attempt upon the throne. In the forests of Chantilly he pursued the amusement he could no longer enjoy in Sussex. On the accession of William the Third, Mr. Roper returned and again kept hounds at Charlton; the Duke of Bolton joined him in a sporting partnership, and shared the expenses of the pack; and the Duchess of Bolton, daughter of the Duke of Monmouth, graced Charlton every season with her presence.

The Charlton Hunt now became the best patronised and most popular in England. The sporting portion of the community poured down upon the place with their horses. Some, like the Dukes of Devonshire and St. Albans, erected hunting-boxes in the village of Charlton for their accommodation; others accepted such humble lodging as the inhabitants could offer. All the neighbouring villages were crowded. Under these circumstances, there was an obvious drawback to the enjoyment of the numerous visitors. In the hunting season the days may be delightful, but they are short; and when the long evenings are spent in small lodgings, in cottages, or in the best parlour of the Pig and Whistle in a South Down village, they become rather wearisome. There were the villages, and there they are now, Charlton and Singleton, a mile apart, each very pleasant by daylight so long as the downs and forest, and the green lanes and field-paths are available for walks and rides. Each is equally delectable during the hours that are available for fox-hunting in winter, and picnicing in summer; but after dark, there is not, and there was not a hundred years ago, anything to do. The native inhabitants, very possibly, found something to do, and did it—they had their usual occupations—but it was not so in the case of strangers.

The Earl of Burlington was one of those who disliked the long winter evenings doing nothing in the Pig and Whistle, and he therefore furnished a design for a place of refuge to be built at Charlton, and used of an evening by the fox-hunters. A subscription was started, and a place called Foxhall, consisting of a room and

offices, was erected for the votaries of Diana, as a place of resort during the long winter evenings. And here they came, not always in cabs and carriages, but on foot, stalking up the village in the dark from their close-packed cottages and inconvenient inns. The Duchess of Bolton, with her hereditary love of Charlton and of fox-hunting, invented an appropriate device; a flag-staff was planted before Foxhall, and on the top a gilt fox, fashioned as a weather-cock, swinging round with the wind.

The Earl of Burlington had arranged the details of his design with considerable foresight, and it presently appeared that Foxhall was not only admirably adapted as a banqueting-room, but, under stress of circumstances, it could be used as a saloon, concert-room, drawing-room, assembly-room, and ball-room. It proved, in short, an extraordinarily convenient place of wondrous adaptability, and her grace of Bolton often dined here with the other guests, bringing with her a hopeful young fox-hunter, Lord Nassau Pawlett, her son. And here too her grace frequently breakfasted, and when the repast was over, repaired to a window and watched the weather-cock. The wind is everything in reference to the scent, and the duchess's device was the more appropriate on that account.

The fame of the Charlton Hunt reached its climax. The celebrated St. Victor, chief patron of la chasse at Chantilly, crossed the Channel to hunt with Mr. Roper, whom he had known in exile; and here, among these secluded downs, he met the greatest sportsmen of England, and the cream of her hunting aristocracy.

Among others who joined this famous hunt, as a matter of course, was the Duke of Richmond. Goodwood, till 1720, had been a hunting seat of the Comptons; in that year the Duke of Richmond acquired it, and brought the duchess and the young Lord March to the meet at Charlton. In the evening they came to Foxhall with their daughter, the Lady Ann Lennox, afterwards Countess of Albemarle.

A rival hunt was attempted at Petworth, a neighbouring domain which then belonged to the Duke of Somerset. But the star of Petworth had recently suffered an eclipse. Ten generations of Percies, including Hotspur, had held Petworth in lineal succession, in addition to their

Northumberland property; and then, towards the middle of the last century, a common fate of noble houses had overtaken the house of Percy—it had ended in daughters. There were two. Sir Hugh Smithson married one, and took the northern estate with the name of Percy and the title; the Duke of Somerset married the other, and took Petworth.

The Duke of Somerset was one of the most exceedingly great men who ever condescended to set foot upon the South Downs. Although a stranger to the county, he considered himself the lord paramount of West Sussex, and the greatest man there or anywhere. Seeing hounds one day in full cry not very far from his windows, and horsemen and ladies in full pursuit, he angrily enquired: "Whose hounds are those coming so near my house?"

He was told they were the Charlton pack, Mr. Roper's.

"And who is he?" inquired his grace. "Where's his estate? What right has he to hunt this country? I'll keep a pack or two of hounds myself."

The Duke of Somerset was as good as his word; he built kennels and stables at a place called Twines, near Walton, a village on the Downs, and he sent down a pack of hounds and some first-rate cooks to Petworth; and then he asked the gentlemen of Sussex to a sumptuous breakfast. And whenever the Duke of Somerset gave a sumptuous breakfast, the meet at Petworth House was always well attended, but under any other circumstances people preferred riding as usual with Mr. Roper. That gentleman, as the duke had said, had no land in Sussex, but he was a first-rate master of hounds, he followed fox-hunting because he loved the sport, and he was a consummate judge of everything relating to the noble science.

The gentlemen of Sussex never swerved from their allegiance. They breakfasted at Petworth as often as they were invited, and they hunted with Mr. Roper, except when the Petworth hospitalities intervened. The duke was baffled; during several years he endeavoured, in vain, to carry his point, and he then gave up hunting, and gave away his hounds. Fate had decreed, however, the pre-eminence of a Petworth Pack, and the decadence of the Charlton Hunt.

In 1715 old Squire Roper died in the field at the age of eighty-four. He had ridden with the hounds to Findon, when, just

at the finish, he dropped lifeless from his horse. The hounds devolved on the Duke of Bolton, who had married a second wife, Lavinia Fenton (the original Polly of the *Beggars' Opera*). She knew not Charlton, and would not have much cared perhaps to appear there among the other duchesses, her predecessor having been the granddaughter of a king.

On the retirement of the Duke of Bolton he gave the hounds to the Duke of Richmond, who was assisted in the management by the Earl of Delaware, of Buckhurst.

The redoubtable Tom Johnson was huntsman, and every morning a hundred horses were led out, each with an attendant groom in the Charlton livery of blue, with gold cord and tassels to their caps. Lords and ladies continued to flock to Charlton in the hunting season; and, in 1732, the new master, the Duke of Richmond, built the house which remains, and in which he and the duchess lodged, to be ready for the early meet at eight o'clock.

After the meridian the sun descends and then sets, and so it was with this famous Hunt. It flourished till 1750, when the third duke succeeded, and removed the pack to Goodwood, where he built a splendid kennel.

The grand stand on the Goodwood race-course looks immediately down into the hollow in which Singleton lies on the banks of the little Lavant. The rivulet comes down an adjoining glen, in which is Charlton, hidden from the racecourse by an intervening ridge, but only two miles distant from it, and only a little farther from Goodwood House. There was nothing, therefore, in the site of the kennel to prevent the Goodwood Hunt retaining the fame of that of Charlton; but that did not prove to be the case, and its members were presently confined exclusively to the gentry of the county. The Duke of Richmond was an excellent sportsman, but he did not confine himself so exclusively to fox-hunting as his father and Squire Roper had done.

The Richmond family became political, and when the fourth duke went to Ireland as lord-lieutenant he presented his hounds to George the Fourth. Their star, as a famous pack, soon after set, sinking suddenly, under circumstances that must have keenly touched the kindly hearts of those gentlemen who had long ridden with them. The most terrible misfortune that can fall on fox-hounds overtook them, in the de-

velopment of unmistakable symptoms of madness, which appeared among them, and led to the whole of the pack being destroyed. Foxhall was then pulled down, and all the hunting-boxes of Charlton have since disappeared, except the house of the Dukes of Richmond.

The Petworth Pack is now hunted over this classic ground.

An old title of the Percies, that of Baron Egremont, was revived in favour of the Duke of Somerset, with remainder to his nephew, Sir Charles Wyndham, Bart., who died in 1763. The stables at Twines were not built in vain. The third Earl of Egremont, the son of Sir Charles Wyndham, became the lord paramount of West Sussex, and he became the most successful breeder of racehorses of his day, and won the Derby and the Oaks oftener than anyone else has ever done; even at the present day there hardly exists a racehorse which has not some of the Petworth blood in its veins. His breeding stud was at Twines.

The same princely benefactor of his country and county spent twenty thousand pounds a year, for sixty years, in acts of charity and liberality. The Emperor of Russia, the King of Prussia, and other distinguished map-makers of Europe, expressed a wish to witness the style of living of a great English nobleman, and they were invited to Petworth, and entertained as they desired. Petworth House was a college of agriculture and nursery of art. Turner and Flaxman, when yet unknown, paid long visits to Petworth and studied in its unrivalled galleries. Arthur Young came, too, on another errand, as the chief adviser of one of the great patrons of English agriculture. To complete this story in a word, such was the reputation of Petworth, that, in the course of nature, hounds were kept there as soon as the Goodwood Pack was abandoned. And they have been kept there ever since.

The following manuscript account of a famous run of the Charlton hounds was discovered some years since, framed, and hung up in an old farmhouse at Funtington:

"A full and impartial account of the remarkable chase at Charlton, on Friday, 26th January, 1738.

"It has long been a matter of controversy in the hunting-field to what particular county, or set of men, the superiority belonged. Prejudices and partiality have the greatest share in these disputes, and

every society their proper champion to assert the pre-eminence, and bring home the trophy to their own county. Even Richmond Park has the Dymoke. But on Friday, 26th of January, 1838, there was a decisive engagement on the plains of Sussex, which, after ten hours' struggle, has settled all further disputes, and given the brush to the gentlemen of Charlton.

"Present in the morning: The Duke of Richmond, Duchess of Richmond, Duke of St. Albans, the Lord Harcourt, the Lord Henry Beauchlerk, the Lord Ossulstone, Sir Harry Liddell, Brigadier Henry Hawley, Ralph Jennison, Master of His Majesty's Buckhounds, Edward Pauncefort, Esq., William Farquhar, Esq., Cornet Philip Honeywood, Richard Biddulph, Esq., Charles Biddulph, Esq., Mr. St. Paul, Mr. Johnson, Mr. Peerman of Chichester, Mr. Thompson, Tom Johnson, Billy Ives, Yeoman Pricker to His Majesty's Hounds, David Briggs and Ninn Ives, whippers-in.

"At a quarter before eight in the morning the fox was found in Eastdean Wood, and ran an hour in that cover; then into the forest, up to Puntice Copse; through Heringdean, to the Marlows, up to Covey Coppice, back to the Marlows, to the Forest West Gate, over the fields to Nightingale Bottom, to Cobden's at Draught, up his Pine Pit Hanger, where his grace of St. Albans got a fall; through West Dean Forest, to the corner of Collar Down (where Lord Harcourt blew his first horse), crossed the Hackney-place, down the length of Colney Coppice; through the Marlows to Heringdean, into the Forest, and Puntice Coppice, Eastdean Wood; through the Lower Teglease, across by Cocking Course, down between Graffham and Woolavington; through Mr. Orme's park and paddock, over the Heath, to Fielden's Furzes, to the Harlands, Selham, Ambersham; through Todham Furzes, over Todham Heath, almost to Cowdray Park, there turned to the lime-kiln at the end of Cocking Causeway, through Cocking Park and Furzes, there crossed the road, and up the hills between Bepton and Cocking. Here the unfortunate Lord Harcourt's second horse felt the effect of long legs and a sudden steep; the best thing that belonged to him was his saddle, which my lord had secured; but by bleeding and Geneva (contrary to Act of Parliament) he recovered, and with some difficulty was got home. Here Mr.

Farquhar's humanity claims your regard, who kindly sympathised with my lord in his misfortunes, and had not power to go beyond him. At the bottom of Cocking Warren the hounds turned to the left, across the road by the barn near Heringdean, then took the side to the north gate of the Forest (here General Hawley thought it prudent to change his horse for a true blue that staid up the hills; Billy Ives likewise took a horse of Sir Harry Liddell's); went quite through the Forest went through the Warren above West Dean (where we dropt Sir Harry Liddell), down to Benderton Farm (here Lord Harry sank); through Goodwood Park (here the Duke of Richmond chose to send three lame horses back to Charlton, and took Saucy Face and Sir William, that were luckily at Goodwood; from there, at a distance, Lord Harry was seen driving his horse before him to Charlton). The hounds went out at the upper end of the park, over Strettington Road by Sealy Coppice (where his grace of Richmond got a summer-set); through Halnaker Park, over Halnaker Hill to Seabeach Farm (here the Master of the Stag-hounds, Cornet Honeywood, Tom Johnson, and Ninn Ives, were thoroughly satisfied), up Long Down; through Eartham common fields and Kemp's High Wood (here Billy Ives tired his second horse, and took Sir William, by which the Duke of St. Albans had no great-coat, so returned to Charlton). From Kemp's High Wood the hounds took away through Gunworth Warren, Kemp Rough Piece, over Slindon Down, to Madehurst Parsonage (where Billy came in with them), over Poor Down, up to Madehurst, then down to Houghton Forest, where his grace of Richmond, General Hawley and Mr. Pouncefort came in (the latter to little purpose, for beyond the Race Hill neither Mr. Pouncefort nor his horse Tinker cared to go, so wisely returned to his impatient friends), up the Race Hill, left Sherwood on the right hand, crossed Offham Hill to Southwood, from thence to South Stoke, to the wall of Arundel River, where the glorious twenty-three hounds put an end to the campaign, and killed an old bitch fox, ten minutes before six. Billy Ives, his grace of Richmond, and General Hawley, were the only persons in at the death, to the immortal honour of seventeen stone, and at least as many campaigns."

Tom Johnson, the last huntsman of the Charlton Pack, lies buried in the churchyard at Singleton, in the valley below the

Trundel Hill; and a marble tablet to his memory is inscribed with the following lines:

Here Johnson lies: what hunter can deny
Old honest Tom the tribute of a sigh?
Deaf is that ear that caught the opening sound,
Dumb is that tongue that cheered the hills around.
Unpleasant truth! Death hunts us from our birth,
In view, and men, like foxes, take to earth.

The South Downs of West Sussex are still noted for fox-hunting; but the revelry of the Goodwood week, within sight and sound of the old huntsman's grave, is a modern addition to the pastimes of the district.

ALL OR NOTHING.

BY MRS. CASHEL HOEY,

AUTHOR OF "A HOUSE OF CARDS," "GRIFFITH'S DOUBLE,"
&c. &c.

CHAPTER XXVIII. LAURA.

IT was natural that Sir Wilfrid Esdaile should observe Mrs. Thornton a good deal more closely than he would have done had he met her again merely as one of the innumerable persons whom one sees everywhere for awhile, and then ceases to see. He would have studied her, as the woman who had made so strong an impression on Dunstan, with considerable curiosity, but later events lent her an additional interest. She was the distant and indirect cause of his own haunting trouble, of the misfortune that had taken the good out of his life, and, as he was aware, when he would allow himself to listen to the warning, out of himself also. If she had but waited for Dunstan, if she had had just enough constancy, and sufficient of the spirit of the gambler, who always believes in a coming turn of the luck, Sir Wilfrid's own luck would not have been so dead against him in the one great venture that had really been worth making. And how admirably Laura and Dunstan would have suited each other! Under any circumstances that could not have failed to strike Sir Wilfrid; but now, with the strongly contrasted image of Janet always in his mind's eye, he felt it at every turn; and feeling it, found it more than ever difficult to account for Dunstan's marriage, and to reconcile himself to the idea of it. Could he really have come to care for Janet? Had he married her, for some inexplicable motive, without caring for her? In the latter case, Sir Wilfrid, though but little given to thinking of the forecasting kind, seemed in his fancy to see the foam, and to hear the roar of breakers ahead.

He admired Laura excessively—as who

could avoid admiring the brilliant and animated young woman, on whom life was smiling so brightly, and who smiled back at life with responsive brightness? She was handsomer, or he thought her so, now, than before her marriage; and her vivacity, her readiness to please and be pleased, and her unflagging spirits, rendered her charming to everybody. There was no more popular person among the English visitors to Nice that season than the beautiful Mrs. Thornton. Was she absolutely heartless, Sir Wilfrid wondered; did she take everything so lightly as she seemed to do; or had the marriage, in which, unless Dunstan had egregiously deceived himself from the first, her heart was not, turned out a perfect success after all?

The season was unusually fine; even the habitual grumblers, who were given to talk of the "treachery" of the climate, were satisfied for once; and Laura enjoyed her sojourn with a thoroughness that had not yet yielded to the habit of wealth and the unlimited power of indulging her wishes and fancies. Prominent among the latter was her liking for Mrs. Monroe; the impulsive regard with which the young widow had inspired her in Scotland, and which had certainly been due in part to the light sense of boredom that had crept over her in the unrelieved society of her husband and his aunt, was revived and strengthened on their second meeting, and Laura derived great pleasure from the power of being useful to her friend.

"I always longed to have her with us," she said to Miss Wells, "away from that horrid cold place, and those dull skies and dismal mists; and you see how right I was; she is ever so much better. If she had only been with us at Naples and Palermo all the winter, she would be quite well by this time. Just look at her colour, and she does not cough once for every ten times she did ten days ago."

Laura had the hopefulness and the disbelief in serious illness, so long as the invalid can be up and about, that belong to persons who enjoy perfect health, and she persisted in considering Mrs. Monroe merely "delicate." And, indeed, there were hopeful symptoms about her now; at least she seemed to be reprieved. She took long drives with Laura, and even went for a short cruise in the yacht; on which occasion Sir Wilfrid Esdaile was one of the party on board the *Firefly*, and was so attentive to Mrs. Monroe and her odd-looking friend, that Miss Wells "quite took to him," as she expressed it, and

they were all doubly sorry about the rumours that reached them concerning Sir Wilfrid's wildness. But the cruise, though the waves were like molten sapphires, and the sky was like a dome of turquoise, was too much for Mrs. Monroe, and she was unable to go out for some days after it, so that Laura had to come to her, which she did very willingly.

The acquaintance of Miss Wells with Nice, and the associations, so dear in spite of all their pain, that bound her to the place, were of old date, before the modern extension and grandeur of the city; and she adhered to the old places and ways. It was a roomy and comfortable, not a bright or luxurious abode in which Miss Wells had established her headquarters for several years; the modern magnificence of the hotels affected by the Russian, American, and English visitors had no charms for her. She knew everybody in the old quarter, she would say, and everybody knew her: and if the fancy should take her to go off to Jericho, she would have nothing to do but to lock her door, hang up her key on a nail in the dingy bureau below, and go. She would find everything on her return exactly as she had left it, and her coming and going would surprise or concern nobody.

The rooms occupied by Miss Wells and her friend, whom she had established in her own quarters, after a brief inspection had satisfied her that this was a case for the active exercise of her own especial calling, were pleasantly situated on the second floor of a rambling old hotel—it no longer exists—and they opened into a wide corridor which led to a staircase at either end. The rooms, which were lofty, with tall windows commanding a lovely view, communicated with each other from one extremity of the corridor to the other, as was generally the case with buildings of the period of this hotel; and between the rooms at one end, which did not belong to Miss Wells, and the rooms at the other end, which did belong to her, there was merely an ordinary door, not "condemned," only locked, and with a square pane of greenish glass inserted into the upper panel—no one could divine with what purpose, for it was too high to be looked through, and it admitted no light, as the door was in the cross-wall close to the outer wall, while the windows were on the opposite side. Miss Wells had a notion that this unreasonable little window in the door had been made to enable somebody to watch a mad person, unseen, in the time

when the hotel was a private house belonging to an old Savoyard family; but the invisible eye in that case must have been set in the head of a giant. A heavy table, laden with books, was placed across the door with the window in it; and the room, which was pleasant and less bare than the others of the suite, was appropriated to Mrs. Monroe.

Well cared for by the brisk and clever woman, whose warmest feelings were enlisted on her behalf, the young widow was very peaceful in these later days. She was under no delusion about her own state; she was quite happy in the conviction that she had but a short time to live; and the serenity, that came with that certainty, enabled her to take more interest in others than she had taken since the sea had swallowed up all the meaning and value of her life. Miss Wells's only brother was saved from the shipwreck in which Kenneth Monroe was lost, and he had brought home the intelligence; but he died shortly afterwards in the very room which Mrs. Monroe now occupied. This was the link between the strangely-contrasted friends. On their quiet and inevitably sad life Laura shone like a sunbeam, warming and brightening it, and was very welcome. She was delighted with Miss Wells, and proud of her conquest of that rather sturdy-natured person, who had a theoretical aversion to fine ladies, but in reality regarded with pleased curiosity the faits et gestes of a brilliant creature of the human butterfly order, whose ways were so entirely different from her own. Laura's beauty and Laura's dress were objects of unwearying admiration to Miss Wells, whose own looks had never occupied her attention, and whose attire was of a florid description.

"You could not imitate that sort of thing," said Miss Wells; "you must be born to it to dress as Mrs. Thornton does—just as if everything she wears was specially invented for her! And did you ever see a man so much in love with his wife as Mr. Thornton is? He really seems to have no eyes or ears for anyone but her. If she was to be spoilt, I think he must certainly spoil her."

"I fancy she gets a good deal of spoiling from everyone. I am sure she does from you," returned Mrs. Monroe, smiling; "but she bears it very well. She has a kindly nature, if not a deep one, and is not hardened by happiness."

This was a true judgment. Laura Thornton was supremely happy in those days. She had only two troubles, if, indeed, they could be called such. One

was, that she could not have her father with her until after her return to England; the other was, that Mr. Thornton had taken it into his head that the child, for whose birth she might look in the autumn, ought to see the light in his own country. Of course, the child would be a son; everything was so prosperous with Laura that she never doubted that, but always thought of the coming baby as "he," and she understood, if she did not share, her husband's feelings. It was not, however, as if the house at the Mains were ready to receive them: in that case there would be a perfect fitness of things: the grandson of the self-made man ought to be born in the mansion that was to be ancestral in the future: but Laura did not take kindly to the prospect of the Stone House and old Miss Thornton. She thought Hunsford and Lady Rosa would be better than that. However, since Robert had old-fashioned notions about her needing to be with somebody, and since he regarded the event with a solemnity which she hardly comprehended, she would not oppose his wishes. He was so good to her in all things, he really deserved so much concession, and, after all, she must have a spell of dulness somewhere under any circumstances. So she behaved very well about this prospect, consoling herself with the reflection that it was still distant, and that Paris and London lay between, and finding a great deal of pleasure in her life in the meantime. To the childless woman, for whom life was slowly but surely closing, Laura's light way of regarding the benediction of motherhood was strange and a little jarring; but she did not blame Laura, for she knew, at least in theory, that this was the way of Laura's "world," and that she was only as the training and associations of her previous life had made her. She could even be amused by Laura's stories of the serious epistles with which Miss Thornton favoured her, and which contained precepts of the kind that would have had a chance of being followed half a century or so earlier in the history of the world. Laura had a clear perception of the absurd side of everything, and she laughed unrestrainedly at the anticipatory anxieties of the spinster aunt who had had the charge of Robert Thornton's childhood, and seemed to remember every hour of it with a distinctness which a mother could hardly emulate. To Mrs. Monroe, who knew the old lady so well, the spirited description had a pleasantly characteristic meaning.

"I do believe," said Laura, "she sees him in knickerbockers and the Latin grammar already."

"And Lady Rosa Chumleigh?" asked Miss Wells, to whose imagination a Lady Rosa, with such a daughter as Laura, was a most fortunate and enviable personage. "I suppose she is equally pleased and anxious?"

Laura was on the point of saying that Lady Rosa regarded the prospect of becoming a grandmother with a good deal of indifference, but she checked herself. She was too well-bred to yield to the temptation of saying unpleasant things about her own mother to a stranger, however strongly the contrast struck her sense of humour. As a matter of fact, Lady Rosa had dismissed the matter in three lines, briefly recommending Laura to take care of herself, and to be sure to see an English doctor wherever she might be. The notion of Scotland was too ridiculous. Why should Laura not remain at her own house in London?

The utterances of Lady Rosa were not sympathetic, but Laura had never expected that they would be; so that it was not any disappointed or hurt feeling which made her say nothing to Mr. Thornton of her mother's letter. It was a kind of shame and pity for that mother—a feeling different from the mere weariness and vexation that Lady Rosa used to produce in her mind. So much influence the higher order of nature with which she had been associating of late had had on Laura, that she began to see the soul of things, not very distinctly or very willingly as yet, but so that among friends judicious enough to admit that Laura could be improved—Miss Thornton, for instance, and Julia Carmichael—an improvement in her would have been acknowledged.

Had she learned to love her husband? Had she come to prize the love that raised her to an eminence which she had perception enough to appreciate, and to dread a little, as the greatest of treasures and the richest of blessings, in comparison with which every external feature of her most enviable lot was but insignificant? No. Laura had learned to like her husband very much; to feel as much respect for him as she was capable of feeling—for that is a sentiment which needs cultivation in the mind—and to be so thoroughly assured and confident of her own power over him, that she no longer felt vaguely uncomfortable, and as if some constant effort were required of her, in consequence

of the pedestal upon which his devotion and his fancy had set her. At first she felt that there was a standard of some sort in his mind which she did not clearly comprehend, but she was quite sure she should not attain to, and she hated that uneasy consciousness that she was not what he supposed her to be; but she had now ceased to feel it. It would never have existed had Laura known what real love meant, or been able to understand aright that which she had won. From the moment in which Robert Thornton perceived that a solitude à deux was not Laura's notion of happiness, he relinquished the project of continuing to find his in it, and she had enjoyed all the novelty and pleasure of foreign travel and society to her heart's content. With the yacht in attendance, they had sojourned wheresoever she fancied during the winter, and he had schooled himself into content with the share she gave him of her heart, her sympathy, and her company. He had expected too much at first; she had known at once too much and too little of the world; too much to be unconscious of its attractions, too little to be convinced of its emptiness, and wearied of its exactions; he must be patient, and the paradisaical time would come. It would surely come with the child, who, if a new claimant upon Laura's heart, would, at least, be one with whom he could bear to share it, one of whom he could never feel the smallest pang of jealousy, for whom, on the contrary, he might be jealous, if the deeper depths of her nature were not stirred by the new and sacred touch.

Laura had early discerned in her husband's disposition a tendency to jealousy, which is in some cases merely an attribute of temper, but in others the inseparable defect of the quality of strong and deep affections. She was a clear-headed person enough, and she made up her mind, as much, to do her justice, for his sake as for her own, never to provoke the demon. She had had her little spark of romance in her life, and she had trodden it out, deliberately, if not altogether of her own free will. And she had no reason to complain that the reality she had taken in exchange had disappointed her in any way. To the "might have been" she never voluntarily turned her thoughts, after the first pain and bitterness of her interview with Edward Dunstan had passed away; and if a speculation about how they should meet, if ever, where, and when, crossed them, it was not attended by much solicitude.

Laura was not of a disposition to feel apprehension about the future; she carried out the maxim which in homely phrase bids us "not bid the devil good-morrow till we meet him." No doubt she had been a little sorry for herself, and a good deal sorry for Dunstan, but both feelings passed, and only a vague revival of them attended her contemplated return to England. Charming, popular, and admired as she was, the most jealous husband could have found no fault with her; her manners were quite free from coquetry, and her easy eager enjoyment of all the pleasures of society was of the frankest kind. Thus, except in the sense of a disappointed hope of what her feelings towards himself might come to be, a sense which was revealing to him, little by little, the truth that he had expected of her what there was not in her the capacity to give, Robert Thornton never felt the serpent's fang.

We have seen how Captain Dunstan speculated on what might possibly be Laura's feelings concerning his marriage, and though he was mistaken in supposing that her self-complacency would be rudely shaken, it would be vain to deny that Laura did hear of the event with a twinge of mortification. She would not have acknowledged it to herself, and she would have been profoundly disgusted at the bare notion that anyone could have suspected it; nevertheless, she had let it out to Julia. It was very soon, she thought, after all his protestations and his despair. He had got over that pretty quickly, just like a man! However, she had no business, and no inclination to think at all about it; and though she could not help feeling just a little curiosity, she would carefully avoid indulging it by asking questions either of Sir Wilfrid Esdaile or Mrs. Monroe. She was tolerably certain that Sir Wilfrid must know something, if not all, having been with Dunstan at Southampton; and if Dunstan had told his wife, as was not unlikely—for her triumph would but be augmented by a vivid picture of Laura's fickleness and mercenary behaviour, as he, having got over his love for her, would be sure to paint them—what more likely than that his wife would feel curious about her, and question Mrs. Monroe? In case she did so, at least there should be no curiosity on Laura's side to report. Thus it happened that, after the one casual mention of

Mrs. Dunstan on the day of their meeting on the Castle Hill, she was never again referred to by Laura and Mrs. Monroe.

The brief attack of hurt vanity from which Laura suffered was much assuaged by the reflection that the fact of Dunstan's marriage removed from her path the one little difficulty that lay in it. She had nothing to fear from his impetuosity now; his own fickleness, his own readiness to obliterate the past by a new tie, had amply condoned hers. It was not a very long step for Laura's active fancy from this consoling consideration, to wondering where and how she and Mrs. Dunstan should meet, what they would think of each other, and whether Dunstan's Janet was as charming as her Janet. The dead past buried itself with wholesome celerity in Laura's case. She drew several pictures, in her imagination, of the meeting, which, in the nature of things, was to be.

Not one of those pictures prefigured, ever so remotely, the truth of the meeting between Laura Thornton and Edward Dunstan's wife.

Mrs. Monroe was again better towards the close of Laura's stay at Nice, and able to drive out with her friend. The Firefly was to make one last cruise along the coast, with Mr. Thornton and Sir Wilfrid Esdaile on board, before going home. They were a pleasant party at the embarkation. Laura, Mrs. Monroe, and Miss Wells were to drive to Beaulieu after they had taken leave of the gentlemen, whose return was to be looked for in three days.

"I am glad to keep Esdaile out of mischief even for so short a time," Mr. Thornton had said to his wife that morning, "and you must keep him up to coming on to Paris with us. He is horribly reckless, and the set here is worse than ever, if possible."

The farewells were spoken, with smiles and good wishes on the part of the ladies. Mr. Thornton foretold a delightful cruise and added fame for the Firefly. Miss Wells promised him that she would be responsible for Laura's taking care of herself during his cruise. He had taken leave of his wife, and was about to step into the boat, when he turned back, said something to her in a whisper, and kissed her. When they drove away, her companions saw that Laura's eyes were full of tears.

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